



Over the last several decades, the Pentagon, conservative forces, and corporations have been systematically working to expand their presence in the K-12 learning environment and public institutions of higher education. The combined impact of the military, conservative think tanks and foundations, and of corporatization of our public educational systems has eroded the basic democratic concept of civilian public education. It is a trend that, if allowed to continue, will weaken the primacy of civilian rule and, ultimately, our country's commitment to democratic ideals.

The signers of this statement believe it is urgent for all advocates of social justice, peace and the environment to recognize the dangerous nature of this problem and confront it with deliberate action.

## THE THREAT TO CIVILIAN EDUCATION

The most aggressive outside effort to use the school system to teach an ideology with ominous long-term implications for society comes from the military establishment. Over the last two decades, with relatively little media coverage or public outcry, the Pentagon's involvement in schools and students' lives has grown exponentially. Now, for example:

- Every school day, at least half a million high school students attend Junior ROTC classes to receive instruction from retired officers who are handpicked by the Pentagon to teach its own version of history and civics. These students are assigned "ranks" and conditioned to believe that military and civilian values are similar, with the implication that unquestioning obedience to authority is therefore a feature of good citizenship.
- Armed forces academies are being established in some public schools (Chicago now has eight), where all students are given a heavy dose of military culture and values.
- A network of military-related programs is spreading in hundreds of elementary and middle schools. Examples are the Young Marines and Starbase programs, and military programs that sneak into schools under the cloak of Science/Technology/Engineering/Math (STEM) education.
- Military recruiters are trained to pursue "school ownership" as their goal (see: "[Army School Recruiting Program Handbook](#)"). Their frequent presence in classrooms, lunch areas and at assemblies has the effect of popularizing military values, soldiering and, ultimately, war.

(CONTINUED)

## NATIONAL CALL SIGNERS (12/17/2014)

**Michael Albert**, Z Magazine  
**Pat Alviso**, So. California Military Families Speak Out  
**Kathy Barker**, Washington Truth in Recruiting  
**Marc Becker**, Co-chair, Historians Against the War  
**Medea Benjamin**, Co-founder of CODEPINK  
**Bill Bigelow**, Curriculum Editor, Rethinking Schools  
**Peter Bohmer**, Faculty in Political Economy, Evergreen State College  
**Bill Branson**, VVAW National Office  
**Hannah Brock**, War Resisters' International  
**Campaign Nonviolence**, Pace e Bene  
**Noam Chomsky**, Professor, Retired, MIT  
**Michelle Cohen**, Project Great Futures, L.A., CA  
**Tom Cordaro**, Pax Christi USA Ambassador of Peace, Naperville, IL  
**Pat Elder**, National Coal. to Protect Student Privacy  
**Margaret Flowers**, PopularResistance.org  
**Libby Frank**, Northwest Suburban Peace & Education Project, Arlington Hts., IL  
**Hannah Frisch**, Civilian Soldier Alliance  
**Henry Armand Giroux**, Professor, McMaster Univ.  
**Frank Goetz**, Director, West Suburban Faith-based PEACE Coalition, Wheaton, IL  
**Kevin Haake**, Alternatives to the Military, Lincoln, NE, Stop Recruiting Kids  
**Scott Harding**, Professor, Co-author of *Counter-Recruitment and the Campaign to Demilitarize Public Schools* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)  
**Tom Hayden**, Activist, Author, Teacher  
**Arlene Inouye**, Treasurer, United Teachers of L.A.  
**Iraq Veterans Against the War National Office**, NYC  
**Rick Jahnkow**, Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities, Encinitas, CA  
**Jerry Lembcke**, Prof. Emeritus, Holy Cross College  
**Jorge Mariscal**, Professor, Univ. of Calif. San Diego  
**Patrick McCann**, National VFP President, Montgomery County (MD) Education Assn. Board Member  
**Peter McLaren**, Distinguished Fellow in Critical Studies, Chapman University  
**Stephen McNeil**, American Friends Service Committee, San Francisco  
**Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild**  
**Carlos Muñoz**, Professor Emeritus, UC Berkeley Ethnic Studies Dept.  
**Michael Nagler**, Pres., Metta Center for Nonviolence  
**Jim O'Brien**, Co-chair, Historians Against the War  
**Isidro Ortiz**, Professor, San Diego State University  
**Jesus Palafox**, AFSC, Chicago  
**Pablo Paredes**, AFSC 67 Sueños  
**Michael Parenti**, Ph.D., Author & Lecturer  
**Recruiter Watch PDX**, Portland, OR  
**Bill Scheurer**, Exec. Dir., On Earth Peace  
**Cindy Sheehan**, Peace and Social Justice Activist  
**Joanne Sheehan**, New Eng. War Resisters League  
**Mary Shesgreen**, Chair, Fox Valley Citizens for Peace & Justice, Elgin, IL  
**Sam Smith**, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Chicago

CONTINUED . . .

- Since 2001, federal law has overridden civilian school autonomy and family privacy when it comes to releasing student contact information to the military. Additionally, each year thousands of schools allow the military to administer its entrance exam – the ASVAB – to 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> graders, allowing recruiters to bypass laws protecting parental rights and the privacy of minors and gain access to personal information on hundreds of thousands of students.

## THE THREAT TO PUBLIC EDUCATION

Efforts by groups outside the school system to inject conservatism and corporate values into the learning process have been going on for a number of years. In a recent example of right-wing educational intervention, The New York Times reported that tea party groups, using lesson plans and coloring books, have been pushing schools to “teach a conservative interpretation of the Constitution, where the federal government is a creeping and unwelcome presence in the lives of freedom-loving Americans.” (See: <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/09/17/us/constitution-has-its-day-amid-a-struggle-for-its-spirit.html>)

Corporations have been projecting their influence in schools with devices like Channel One, a closed-circuit TV program that broadcasts commercial content daily to captive student audiences in 8,000 schools. Some companies have succeeded in convincing schools to sign exclusive contracts for pizza, soft drinks and other products, with the goal of teaching early brand loyalty to children. A National Education Policy Center report issued in November 2011 documents the various ways in which business/school partnerships are harming children educationally by channeling student thinking “into a corporate-friendly track” and stunting their ability to think critically. (See: <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/schoolhouse-commercialism-2011>)

The development of this corporate-friendly track dovetails with a radical corporate agenda to dismantle America's public education system. States across the country are slashing educational spending, outsourcing public teacher jobs, curbing collective-bargaining rights, and marginalizing teachers' unions. There is a proliferation of charter and "cyber" schools that promote private sector involvement and a push toward for-profit schools where the compensation paid to private management companies is tied directly to student performance on standardized assessments. The cumulative effect is the creation of institutions that cultivate a simplistic ideology that merges consumerism with subservience.

(See: <http://motherjones.com/politics/2011/12/michigan-privatize-public-education>)

The corporatization of education via charter schools and the administration sector growth at universities is another troubling trend for public education. Diane Ravitch's book *Reign of Error* (<http://www.npr.org/2013/09/27/225748846/diane-ravitch-rebuked-education-activists-reign-of-error>) and Henry A. Giroux's newest book, *Neoliberalism's War on Higher Education*, <http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/22548-henry-giroux-beyond-neoliberal-miseducation> give pointers to the questionable role of corporate involvement in public education.

Why is this happening? About \$600 billion is spent a year on education in the U.S., and as noted by former *New York Times* correspondent Chris Hedges in a 2012 interview on *Democracy Now!*, “The corporations want it.”

### NATIONAL CALL SIGNERS CONTINUED (12/17/2014)

**Kristin Stoneking**, Exec. Dir., Fellowship of Reconciliation USA

**David Swanson**, World Beyond War

**Chris Venn**, San Pedro Neighbors for Peace & Justice, San Pedro, CA

**Veterans for Peace National Office**, St. Louis, MO

**Veterans for Peace Chicago Chapter**

**Vietnam Veterans Against the War National Office**, Champaign, IL

**Amy Wagner**, YA-YA Network (Youth Activists-Youth Allies), New York City

**War Resisters League National Office**, NYC

**Harvey Wasserman**, Activist

**Colonel Ann Wright**, Retired, Army/Army Reserves

**Mickey Z.**, Author of *Occupy this Book: Mickey Z.* on Activism

**Kevin Zeese**, PopularResistance.org

## STOPPING THESE THREATS

There is reason to be hopeful about reversing these trends if we look, for example, at some of the successes in grassroots efforts to curb militarism in schools. In 2009, a coalition of high school students, parents and teachers in the very conservative, military-dominated city of San Diego succeeded in getting their elected school board to shut down JROTC firing ranges at eleven high schools. Two years later, the same coalition got the school board to pass a policy significantly limiting military recruiting in all of its schools. Though such initiatives are relatively few in number, similar victories have been won in other school districts and on the state level in Hawaii, Maryland and New Hampshire.

There are also some organizations supporting efforts to introduce history and civics lessons from a progressive perspective, such as the Zinn Education Project ([www.zinnedproject.org](http://www.zinnedproject.org)) and Rethinking Schools ([www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)). And a small movement is working against Channel One and the commercialization of the school environment (e.g., <http://www.commercialalert.org/issues/education/> and <http://www.obligation.org/>).

As promising and effective as these efforts are, they pale in comparison to the massive scale of what groups on the other side of the political spectrum are proactively doing in the educational environment to preserve the influence of conservatism, militarism and corporate power.

**It is time for progressive organizations, foundations and media to confront this problem and become equally involved in the educational system.** It is especially important that more organizations unite to oppose the growing intrusion of the Pentagon in K-12 schools and universities. Restoring the primacy of civilian rule and democratic values in our country cannot be done without stopping the militarization and corporate takeover of public education.

[www.savecivilianeducation.org](http://www.savecivilianeducation.org)

*Chinese proverb: "When planning for a year, plant rice. When planning for a decade, plant trees. When planning for life, train and educate people." Guanzi (c. 645 BCE)*

SEE "WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?" SECTION FOR ACTION IDEAS . . .

## WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Progressive individuals, organizations, foundations and media all have important roles to play in confronting the conservative, corporate and military influences in our educational system. Below are lists of ideas for action and groups that offer useful resources and background information.

### IDEAS FOR ORGANIZATIONS AND INDIVIDUALS:

1. Everyone can raise awareness and stimulate constructive dialogue by circulating this call as widely as possible.
2. Consider holding a community or chapter meeting to discuss how your neighbors would like to move forward.
3. Organizations can devote resources to youth outreach and education. For example:
  - Create a youth/student leadership component of your organization.
  - Develop a speakers pool for youth groups, classrooms and workshops at youth conferences. (See <http://www.teachingforchange.org/>)
  - Sponsor essay/video/spoken word contests with themes that will educate and engage young people. (See <http://peacefulvocations.org/> re. annual poetry slam).
  - Send your regular news releases or specially written ones to editors of high school student newspapers; place ads in student papers and offer them op-ed pieces for publication.
  - Provide literature and other resources to enable students to do peer education. There are many models that can be adapted for this work. (See the various groups listed below.)
  - Organize teams to distribute youth-friendly leaflets at school entrances. (See <http://comdsd.org/youth.htm>.)
  - Contact schools about participating in career/college fairs with a display highlighting career and volunteer opportunities for social change activism. (See <http://www.projectyano.org> and <http://www.forusa.org/iwillnotkill>.)
4. Become involved in shaping education policy:
  - Monitor activities of businesses, the military and conservative organizations in local schools; object when such groups violate policies and laws on access to campuses and student education records; propose new policies, if needed, to restrict their activities. (E.g., see <http://www.projectyano.org/educationnotarms/>.)
  - Monitor and oppose efforts to replace public education with for-profit, corporate-run charter schools. (See <http://nepc.colorado.edu/>, [Rethinking Schools](#), <http://classroomstruggle.org> re. reports and studies.)
  - Investigate whether students are being involuntarily placed into military indoctrination programs like JROTC or are being tracked into the military by denying them access to college prep classes and other alternatives to the military. (See [Education Not Arms Coalition](#).)
  - Form alliances with parents, students and community groups working on education-related issues.

- Become involved in the selection of school district governing boards:
  - Do surveys of candidates for elected board seats and circulating their answers to questions on key issues.
  - Run candidates in board elections.

#### IDEAS FOR FOUNDATIONS:

1. Give a high priority to supporting efforts to resist the militarization and commercialization of schools.
2. Support outreach and educational initiatives to teach progressive values to young people.
3. Support both youth-led organizations AND community groups that educate or support youth activism.

#### IDEAS FOR MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS, JOURNALISTS AND BLOGGERS:

1. Present stories and analysis that will raise awareness about the problem of allowing conservative groups, the military and commercial interests to influence the educational system.
2. Make a deliberate effort to cover organizing that focuses on youth activism and movements to resist the militarization and commercialization of schools.

#### **CONTACT THESE ORGANIZATIONS FOR VALUABLE ORGANIZING TOOLS AND BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

- GENERAL EDUCATION POLICY AND ALTERNATIVE CURRICULUM:

Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University  
<http://annenberginstitute.org/>

National Education Policy Center  
<http://nepc.colorado.edu/>

Zinn Education Project  
[www.zinnedproject.org/](http://www.zinnedproject.org/)

Rethinking Schools  
[www.rethinkingschools.org](http://www.rethinkingschools.org)

Justice Matters  
<http://www.justicematters.org/>

New York Collective of Radical Educators (NYCoRE)  
<http://www.nycore.org/>

Teachers for Social Justice  
<http://www.teachersforjustice.org/>

Education for Liberation Network  
<http://www.edliberation.org/>

*Reign of Error* by Diane Ravitch (on charter v. public schools)

<http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2010/nov/11/myth-charter-schools/>  
<http://www.npr.org/2013/09/27/225748846/diane-ravitch-rebukes-education-activists-reign-of-error>

The Myth Behind Public School Failure

<http://www.yesmagazine.org/issues/education-uprising/the-myth-behind-public-school-failure>

#### COMMERCIALISM AND CORPORATE INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS:

Public Citizen's Commercial Alert/Education

<http://www.commercialalert.org/issues/education/>

Teaching for Change

<http://www.teachingforchange.org/>

- MILITARISM IN SCHOOLS:

The National Network Opposing the Militarization of Schools (NNOMY)

<http://www.nnomy.org/>

The Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities (Project YANO)

<http://projectyano.org/>

Education Not Arms Coalition

<http://www.projectyano.org/educationnotarms/>

The National Coalition to Protect Student Privacy (campaign against military testing in high schools):

[www.studentprivacy.org](http://www.studentprivacy.org)

The Military Recruitment Project of the New York Civil Liberties Union

<http://www.nyclu.org/issues/youth-and-student-rights/military-recruitment>

The War Resisters League

<http://www.warresisters.org/counterrecruitment>

Veterans for Peace

<http://www.veteransforpeace.org/>

Demilitarizing Youth Facebook page (NNOMY)

<https://www.facebook.com/DeMilitarizingYouth?ref=hl>

Countering the Militarisation of Youth (CMOY)

<http://www.antimili-youth.net/>

- YOUTH ACTIVISM AND EXPRESSION:

What Kids Can Do

<http://www.whatkidscando.org/>

YA-YA Network (Youth Activists-Youth Allies)

<http://yayanetwork.org/>

Committee Opposed to Militarism & the Draft (students' rights)

<http://comdsd.org/>

I Will Not Kill Campaign

<http://forusa.org/groups/campaigns/i-will-not-kill>

Youth Ministries for Peace and Justice (YMPJ)

<http://ympj.org/>